

Forrest K. Elson Memorial Fund

Until recently, the Lake Ripley Management District had no official procedure for accepting donations for the benefit of Lake Ripley. This all changed last year when Maggie Kempel requested that we accept donations in memory of her late father, Forrest Elson. She explained that her father was a long time resident who loved the lake and had a passion for fishing. To honor her father's memory, she suggested that memorial donations be used to help pay for fishery enhancement and general lake-improvement programs.



As a result of her encouragement, we have now established the Forrest K. Elson Memorial Fund. This type of fund is long overdue, and we hope that others who care about the health of the lake will choose to participate. Proceeds will be used to help finance special projects on and around the lake, especially those that may directly or indirectly benefit Lake Rip-

ley's fishery. Project funding decisions will be made on an ongoing basis by the Lake District Board, depending on available dollars and current program needs.

Those who wish to donate to the fund can send their checks made payable to the Lake Ripley Management District to P.O. Box 22, Cambridge, WI 53523. Please indicate on your check or an attached note that the donation is for the "FKE Fund." All donations are recognized as tax-deductible charitable contributions by the Internal Revenue Service.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY!

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LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

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FROM THE HELM



Sometimes we forget that there is a symbiotic relationship between land and water. What we do on the land almost always affects the quality of our lakes and streams... for better or worse. Land-use decisions and development standards not only impact water quality, but also how a lake is accessed and its vulnerability to overcrowding.

Our recently completed recreational carrying capacity study (see article on pg. 2) has emphasized the need to look beyond the lake and its immediate shoreline if we are to effectively protect the resource. The study has shown that, during peak-use periods, we consistently exceed the number of watercraft that can safely and prudently operate on the lake at one time. While it may not be realistic to believe we can dictate the number of watercraft that use the lake, there are measures that can be taken (both on the water and on land) to alleviate the problem.

Managing congestion and lake-use conflict could involve a variety of strategies. On land, we can review existing public access controls, such as launch fees and parking availability. We can look at land-use zoning practices, and the likely consequences of permitting more keyhole subdivisions and private boat-launching facilities. Existing pier ordinances can also be assessed. On the water, we can explore the potential merits—and drawbacks—of horsepower and speed limits, and discuss ad-current rules. Finally, we can look into improving education and enforcement of the

This is not to say that any one of these measures is warranted or even appropriate. However, we do need to begin an open and frank discussion of the problem and its possible solutions, and we look forward to engaging in that dialogue in the months ahead.

John Molinaro

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

Time is Running Out!

State funding for the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project is scheduled to end in 2006! That means only two more years remain for property owners to compete for limited cost-sharing dollars. Since 1994, over 50 landowners throughout the Lake Ripley watershed have participated, receiving many thousands of dollars in cost sharing. Please contact the Lake District office if you are contemplating property improvements to minimize stormwater runoff, control soil erosion, or improve fisheries and wildlife habitat. Technical and financial assistance will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. The following are examples of projects that may be eligible for up to 70% cost-share reimbursement:

- Shoreline rock riprap protection
- Stormwater infiltrating 'rain gardens'
- Shoreline planting & habitat restoration
- Environmental easements
- Wetland creation/restoration
- Cropland nutrient-management plans
- Stream & ditch bank stabilization
- Grassed waterways
- Terracing on steep, eroding slopes
- Conservation farming practices

Assessing 'Carrying Capacity'

During the 2003 boating season, a comprehensive watercraft census was conducted on Lake Ripley to better quantify lake use. The census took place from May 1st to September 1st, and consisted of several hundred individual boat counts, thanks to a handful of very devoted volunteers. Random counts were taken during no-wake and unregulated hours on both weekdays and weekends. Data included:

- Date, time & weather conditions
- Number of each type of watercraft in use
- Ratio of stationary/idle-cruising boats to fast-moving/wake-producing boats

The census also involved monitoring traffic through the public access. Daily launch records (obtained from Town of Oakland) and random counts of parked trailers were used to evaluate the significance of the public landing to overall boating congestion.

Finally, two shoreline surveys were performed over the summer to count moored, docked and beached watercraft. The number, location and length of individual piers, and the number of boat slips on each structure were also documented.



All census data were entered into a computer spreadsheet to generate various statistical comparisons on lake use (i.e., early vs. late summer, weekdays vs. weekends, and no-wake vs. wake hours). Results generated for each time period included:

- Maximum & average boat counts and corresponding surface-area densities
- Relative percentages of each watercraft type
- Lake-use patterns among competing watercraft, activities and boat speeds
- Public access utilization rates

Next, a procedure was developed for estimating recreational carrying capacity under varying user conditions. Carrying capacity was defined as the number of watercraft that could simultaneously operate on the lake without 1) compromising user safety; 2) causing high levels of user displacement or interference; and 3) causing unacceptable risk of environmental harm. A recent carrying capacity study that evaluated lakes

in southwestern Michigan was used as a model. The procedure was also partially based on methods employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assess Illinois' Fox River Chain O'Lakes. It involved first computing a useable surface area by looking at existing lake zoning, minimum safety requirements, and environmental-impact considerations. The next step was to establish a range of optimum boating densities with the aid of published spatial requirements for different watercraft, activities and speeds.

Experts on the subject widely agree that no single boating density standard will satisfy all lake users in all situations. Each lake is unique, and users will have different perspectives on what constitutes congestion. Consequently, a sliding scale of optimal densities was formulated to best capture all potential combinations of watercraft types, uses and speeds that may be observed at any given time.

Using 2003 census data, we found that average boating densities during unregulated hours on July-August weekends greatly exceeded estimated carrying capacity. Capacity was exceeded 16 out of 17 observed days within this peak, mixed-use period. Alternatively, observed densities on weekdays and during no-wake hours remained well below capacity.

Our analysis implies a high probability for unsafe boating conditions, user conflict and environmental degradation as a result of overcrowding on busy weekends. These findings are currently being shared with the Oakland Town Board. The Lake District hopes to begin working with the Town to devise and implement strategies to address the issue. As always, our goal is to advance policies and management programs that are well researched, cost-effective, and that support sustainable and equitable lake use.

This study is already attracting considerable interest from other lake groups and managers at the regional, state and national levels. The positive and far-reaching response only goes to underscore that the effect of overcrowding is a real concern, and one that we cannot afford to ignore.

(For further details, a copy of the full report can be downloaded from our Web site at lakeripley.org or reviewed at the Cambridge Public Library.)

Lake Ripley News Briefs

The Power of Leveraging

Since its inception in late 1990, the Lake Ripley Management District has had tremendous success in leveraging local tax revenues to obtain outside funding. To date, we are pleased to report that over \$1 million in state and federal grants have been secured! This roughly translates into \$2 in outside financing for every \$1 raised through local real estate taxes! About 70% of these grant dollars are attributed to the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project. This pollution abatement effort will continue to receive about \$72,000 in annual state funding through 2006.



Aggressively pursuing alternative funding sources has allowed the Lake District to leverage local tax dollars to...

- Retain professional staff to develop and implement programs
- Offer cost-share incentives to landowners to control pollution sources
- Acquire public lands and conservation easements
- Implement stormwater and erosion-control projects
- Purchase weed-harvesting equipment
- Renovate the public boat landing
- Conduct numerous studies and biological inventories
- Develop lake and aquatic plant management plans
- Restore wetlands
- Carry out educational programming

Thanks to the power of leveraging, great progress was made possible over the years within the framework of a very modest operating budget. The Lake District Board and staff remain committed to extending this success in the years ahead, and are grateful for your ongoing confidence and support as we work to protect Lake Ripley.

A Sad Farewell

It is with great sorrow that we say goodbye to our dear friend, Raymond Kisow Jr., who passed away on November 6, 2003 at age 76. Ray lived and worked in the Cambridge area all his life, and shared a home with his wife, Ann, on Lake Ripley before his death. He was a long-time business owner, decorated war veteran, avid outdoorsman, and lifelong community leader. Ray was also tremendously devoted to public service, serving on a number of boards and committees at both the township and county levels. For the last 40+ years, he served as supervisor and then chairman of the Town of Oakland.



We are grateful to have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Ray, and for all he gave to his community. Our thoughts and deepest sympathies go out to all of Ray's family and friends for their loss.

Brain Teaser

The first exotic freshwater animal was introduced into Wisconsin waters in 1890. What was it?.....[Answer: common carp]

Employment Opportunity

The Lake District is seeking a part-time assistant to join our summer weed-harvesting team. This position involves operating a mechanical harvester and shore conveyor, following an approved harvesting plan, and driving a manual-transmission dump truck.



The work season runs from late June to the end of September. Hours will vary depending on weed-growth conditions, but have typically averaged 10-15 hours per week in the past. The starting wage rate is \$10.00/hr.

To apply, send a cover letter, resume and references to P.O. Box 22, Cambridge, WI 53523.

Mark Your Calendars

Lake District Meeting Schedule

Meetings are usually held the third Saturday of each month starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Oakland Town Hall. Log onto lakeripley.org for the latest announcements, or to review minutes from prior meetings. Agendas will be posted and published in the Cambridge News.

Wisconsin Lakes Convention

April 15-17, 2004
KI Convention Center, Green Bay, WI
Call 715-346-2116 for details



Community Litter Cleanups

1) Thursday, April 21, 2004 (day before Earth Day)
2) Saturday, August 14, 2004
Call 608-423-4537 for details

Beware of Winter Ice Hazards

Aside from thin ice and the threat of frostbite, there is another danger that may lurk on Lake Ripley's frozen surface—METAL PIPES. Snowmobilers and ATV riders are at greatest risk, so be on the lookout for these dangerously protruding safety hazards.

A few of these nearly invisible and potentially deadly pipes were discovered on the lake this winter, and their locations have been reported to the appropriate authorities. Responsible parties face "obstruction of navigation" fines of \$181, and could be held liable in the event of a resulting injury or death. To report a violation, contact the DNR tip line at 1-800-847-9367.